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ABSTRACT

The 68th annual conference of the Association of American Colleges focused on literacy in foreign languages, international studies, values, and science and technology. The conference proceedings are summarized and two speeches are reproduced, the report of the chairman of the board of directors (Samuel R. Spencer, Jr.) and the address of the association president (Mark H. Curtis). In the opening panel of the conference, what it means today to be literate, or liberally educated, was discussed. Speakers in sessions on foreign languages and international studies stressed the importance of these studies and the need for an intercultural approach to postsecondary education. Support structures and continuity are viewed as essential to the success of these efforts. Discussion of values literacy centered on the general concern for how values are taught and when they should enter the curriculum. Concurrent sessions and task force groups considered values through teaching, curricula for values education, and values education outside the classroom. Discussion of scientific and technological literacy addressed concerns and issues in preparation of students for an increasingly technologically complex world. The state of science and technology education at the postsecondary level and curricular approaches to problems were discussed. Lists of members of the annual meeting subcommittee of the board of directors and the three steering committees (foreign languages and international studies, values, and science and technology) are appended. (MSE)

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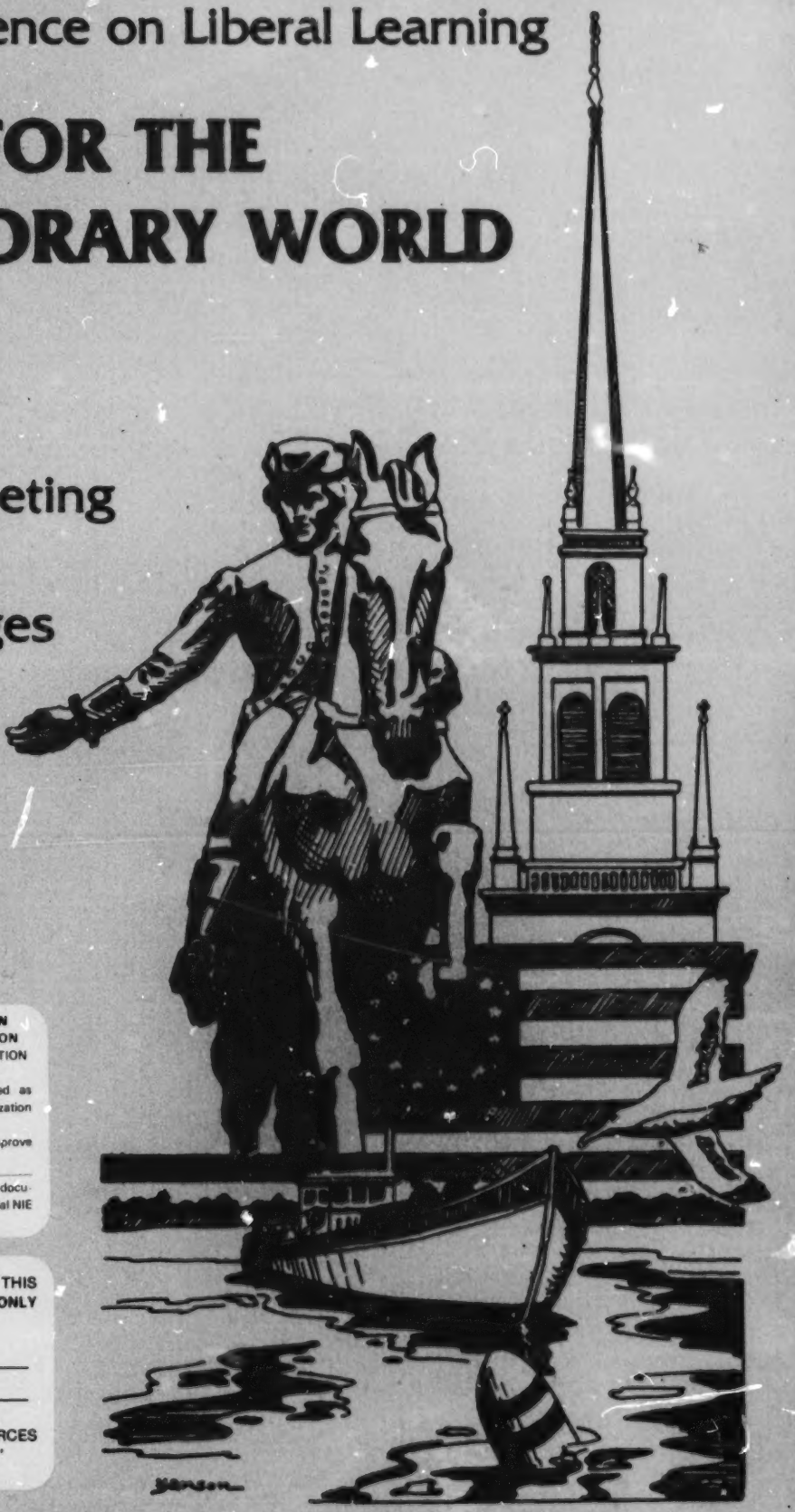
National Conference on Liberal Learning

# LITERACY FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

68th Annual Meeting
Association of
American Colleges



## A Report

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# LITERACY FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

A Report of the

68th Annual Meeting

of the

Association of American Colleges

Published by the Association of American Colleges

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1982

# LITERACY FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

## Introduction

In the months that have followed the Association of American Colleges' 1982 Annual Meeting held last January in Boston, national and international events have occured which underscore the necessity of "Literacy for the Contemporary World." Conflicts in the Middle East and South Atlantic accentuate the need for better understanding of the ways other cultures function and for greater knowledge of international events in diplomatic ventures. The growing anti-nuclear arms movement highlights the public's fears of super-technology. And in all these events, a questioning of values, both individual and national, is afoot. In this light and with this awareness, AAC presents these summaries, speeches, and suggestions for academic institutions from the concurrent sessions and discussion groups at the Annual Meeting on literacy in foreign languages and international studies, values, and science and technology.

## Opening Panel

"Liberal education is a rite of passage," according to James A. Joseph, vice president and assistant to the chairman of Cummins Engine Company. "Liberal education is a way of inquiry," said Robert F. Goheen, president emeritus of Princeton University. The purpose of liberal education, proposed F. James Rutherford, advisor to the Board of Directors of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is to "enrich human existence." In an opening session panel discussion moderated by Virginia Smith, president of Vassar College, Joseph, Goheen, and Rutherford discussed what it means to be literate, or liberally educated, today. The three panelists turned to the three literacies identified above by AAC for the meeting and to the question of skills vs. content in postsecondary education. Smith, in conclusion, asserted that the two must be combined: "Skills should be achieved through the best content."

## Foreign Languages and International Studies

Every individual, from the students to the college president, must become involved in the transformation needed on each campus to incorporate a global perspective, including both language and intercultural study, in a college education.

AAC's speakers on the subject of literacy in foreign languages and international studies stressed the need for everyone to explain again and again the importance of such study in today's shrinking world and to incorporate an intercultural focus in approaches to postsecondary education. Support structures, they said, are needed to back up these changes. Everyone should unite, as well, to form rewards and reviews to ensure the continuity of these efforts.

In its attempt to grapple with this pervasive problem, AAC divided the subject into concurrent sessions on "International Mobility and Global Perspectives," "Connecting Foreign Languages with General Education and Careers," and "International Exchanges and Study Abroad." Participants in the sessions and discussion groups repeatedly mentioned three publications which are especially useful in either defining the problem or suggesting strategies for dealing with it: AAC's Toward Education with a Global Perspective, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Internationalizing the Curriculum, and U.S. Representative Paul Simon's The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis.

Philip Secor, president of Cornell College, chaired the exciting session on "Connecting Foreign Languages with General Education and Careers" conducted by Claire Gaudiani, project director of the Exxon Workshop for Development of Foreign Languages and lecturer in romance languages at the University of Pennsylvania, and author Perdita Huston, scholar-in-residence at Wheaton College and former associate director for development education with the U.S. Peace Corps.

Global education, which includes foreign language and cultural study, is "in the national interest and essential to national security," declared Perdita Huston. America's inattention to the views and sensibilities of other peoples is "insulting and foolhardy," she continued, as delegates are out-maneuvered behind the scenes and representatives are unable to understand other cultures, much less negotiate with them. Huston explained further that trade and international security depend upon global awareness and that global politics respects no boundaries.

Blaming the media for much of the misrepresentation of other cultures and consequently the ignorance of the American people, Huston called for consciousness-raising at campuses across the country by faculty and administrators and by counting on foreign students as a resource to correct this grave error. She maintained that everyone must be convinced that global issues are local issues, that the two are forever entwined. In conclusion, Huston offered the successful program at Wheaton College for integrating the study of women into the curriculum as a model for the permeation of global awareness throughout all teaching.

Claire Gaudiani opened her discussion with some advice. First, everyone from faculty and deans to the development office must work together to secure funds for solid international studies and foreign language programs. Second, she offered a warning tinged with irony: Everyone involved should be aware that they are dealing with people who often remember how much it hurt when they were inflicted with studying a language (poorly taught) and who sincerely do not wish to inflict such an experience on anyone else.

Gaudiani then described trends on campuses in languages study and global awareness. They include: language study in professional programs and foreign business internships; use of popular materials (such as magazines) from a country where the

language studied is spoken; restructuring curricula to include intensive language models; scheduling language courses in conjunction with related social science and other courses and linking them; including more intellectual stimulation in beginning language classes; using a variety of language texts that relate to students' career choices; incorporating the history, nature, and function of language in world of language courses; assigning culture briefs in language classes; establishing one-hour credit proficiency maintenance courses for students to keep in touch with a language; returning to proficiency-based language requirements; and teaching foreign language reading and writing.

Leland Miles, president of the University of Bridgeport and of the International Association of University Presidents, began discussion of "International Mobility and Global Perspectives" by describing the hard facts of global interdependence and global illiteracy in this country. He warned, "A nation's leadership cannot go beyond the capacities of its electorate." Miles charged that such illiteracy is harmful to the student, the student's parents, and to the nation: The student cannot succeed in a multicultural world where one out of every four dollars is spent in international investment; the parents are shortchanged on the quality education they think they are paying for; and the nation suffers from a global ignorance that leads to support of military might as a means toward peace.

Alice Ilchman, president of Sarah Lawrence College, described strategies administrators might use to promote global literacy. She suggested periods of released time for faculty to rework courses to include global perspectives. Colleges could discover what courses foreign students are taking and broaden them to include a multicultural view. She also called for strong performance-based language requirements. In closing, she emphasized the influence a president should use to communicate the necessity of global awareness to governing boards, the institution, and its surrounding community.

The creation of a presidential roundtable to consider international outlooks for a campus was suggested by Walter Rosenblith, Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and chairman of the Board of Foreign Scholarships. He suggested further that scientists, many of whom already work in an international setting, should play a central role in any exchange of global perspectives.

The concurrent sessions on "International Exchanges and Study Abroad" emphasized the role of consortia in providing services for study abroad programs. Jon W. Fuller, president of the Great Lakes Colleges Association, and Charles Neff, president of Associated Colleges of the Midwest, compared and contrasted their international programs. Barbara B. Burn, director of international programs at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, chaired the session and provided commentary.

Fuller and Neff agreed that their consortia are able to sustain international programs which individual colleges cannot. Though each attracts a combined pool of participants for the programs, their administration of the programs varies. GLCA entrusts the management and leadership of their programs to faculty at member colleges, while providing quality control and direct evaluation at their central office. ACM has developed an elaborate liaison network with its member campuses.

Neff outlined some basic steps a consortium must observe when initiating an international study program: 1) It must choose a program which can sustain enough

interest; 2) it must expect to lose money for three years; 3) it must establish a campus liaison network from the beginning; 4) it must exercise flexibility while designing programs to fit their locations; 5) it must conduct evaluative site visits every year; 6) it must consider variations in staffing at the campus; and 7) it must keep the college presidents and deans informed about the programs.

Fuller discussed some of the disadvantages of international programs run by consortia. Though faculty development is usually a direct benefit of international exchanges and study abroad, the number of faculty members involved is spread over the entire membership and each particular college does not necessarily benefit. There is the ever-present hassle of dealing with different college calenders. Students are not as thoroughly prepared for study abroad as they might be by programs sponsored by individual campuses. And any other problems that might develop are handled in a more diffuse way by the consortia than they would be by individual campuses.

The by-products of study abroad go beyond the much needed intercultural education of the students which remains at its foundation. The students return to their campuses to relay much of the experience to their peers, to contribute different perspectives in class, and to spur their teachers on to a broader study of their own. In addition, Jon Fuller described the extended faculty development of program administrators encouraged by GLCA through the travel experience itself and the new study it requires, conferences and workshops on teaching a particular subject, the sharing of teaching materials and visiting lecturers among consortia members, and the benefit of collective enthusiasm.

Discussion groups convened to offer suggestions on the topic of international studies and foreign language literacy. Some of the proposals were: development of a continuing policy statement on foreign languages and international studies independent of support from key administrators; improvement of advising in foreign languages and international studies; setting foreign language admissions requirements; inviting successful graduates with foreign languages and international studies backgrounds to address students; providing visibility to faculty involved in research or programs with international perspectives by publishing a special directory of their activities; imposing an intercultural studies requirement; integrating a global perspective into graduate instruction; expanding foreign language instruction to include more non-western languages and international studies; tailoring faculty development efforts to include study of foreign languages and international studies; and involving local community and business leaders who have international experience.

## Values

The discussion of values literacy at AAC's 1982 Annual Meeting centered on a general concern for how values are taught and when they should enter the curriculum. Concurrent sessions and task force discussion groups considered topics of values through teaching, curricula for values education, and values education outside the classroom. Throughout these sessions, four major concerns stood out: the relationship between values education and liberal learning; the need to integrate values education into the curriculum at all levels; the problems of faculty in providing this education; and the importance of the institutional role in values education.

The sessions were conducted by: Daniel Callahan, director of the Hastings Center, Richard Morrill, president of Salem College and president-elect of Centre College of Kentucky, and Patsy Sampson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Drake University ("Teaching Values Through the Curriculum"); Margaret Earley, coordinator of the Department of Valuing and Decision-Making at Alverno College, Robert Marcus, provost at Rollins College, and Don Schmeltekopf, president of the Community College Humanities Association ("Values In Teaching"); and Carol Gilligan, associate professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, Joseph Katz, professor of human development and director of research for human development and educational policy at the State University of New York-Stony Brook, and John Maguire, president of the Claremont University Center and Graduate School ("Institutional Responsibility for Student Development").

The participants reiterated the integral role of liberal learning in promoting critical thinking and self-awareness. The session on "Teaching Values Through the Curriculum" maintained that liberal learning prepares students to account for values in terms of their meanings and consequences. At the same time, liberal learning itself depends upon and reflects the values of truth, rigor, and clear thinking as requisities for maintaining the community of inquiry, according to the session on "Values In Teaching." The liberal curriculum affirms such values as respect for others and for the role of the community in shaping human experience. The shaping of character, developing of an appropriate role for feelings as the basis of decision and action, and working in relationships with others were considered, not just as issues for intellectual examination, but as direct objectives of the curriculum.

Participants in the sessions mentioned above generally felt that the most effective way to introduce and sustain values in the curriculum is by viewing this education as a perspective that is integrated, whenever appropriate, into all fields. (There was some disagreement on the meaning of "perspective." Some participants defined it in terms of getting students simply to be conscious of their own values. Others saw it as those occasions when teachers would express their own value judgements on particular issues. A third view understood the value perspective as a process of reasoning or how one goes about making a defensible value judgement.) Such an integrated approach was viewed as superior to specific courses on values which might limit and compartmentalize such considerations and interfere with the ongoing relationship between thought and principled action characteristic of a good liberal education.

On the other hand, many participants cited upper level and pre-professional courses as appropriate for explicit attention to values issues. The increase in concern for professional ethics was noted frequently as a positive development which should be used to encourage engaged thinking rather than to disseminate rules, formulae, or "answers." However, freshman seminars, general education courses, and interdisciplinary offerings dealing with specific social problems were suggested as possible places with the curriculum for intensive discussions of values.

Parts of the various discussions, especially those on "Values In Teaching," emphasized the crucial role of the faculty and identified some difficulties that may contribute to poor values instruction. First, the technical, methodology-oriented training of many faculty does nothing to encourage them to raise values issues in their teaching. A second problem, according to the session on "Teaching Values Through the Curriculum," is the lack of faculty competence to deal with value

questions at anything more than an empirical or superficial level. Third, faculty are understandably reluctant to engage in values issues in the classroom because they fear charges of indoctrination. (It was widely agreed that faculty must avoid tainting the learning process with indoctrination, an obligation which is, in fact, another argument for the critical function in values education. However, such a requirement should not be used to side-step substantive value questions.) Fourth, courses in values-related subjects are often reputedly "soft." Fifth, faculty are first and foremost concerned with coverage of their subject matters and express an unwillingness to pause for serious consideration of values questions. And sixth, students often lack adequate means to articulate their value assumptions.

A solution proposed to alleviate these problems was to involve faculty in thinking about values education, either through encouragement of self-education or through implementation of faculty development projects on campus. An example of the latter is the Summer Seminar program at Rollins College in which members of the philosophy department led seminars to train other faculty members in the teaching of ethics.

Finally, participants noted the variety of ways in which attention to values takes place outside the classroom. Faculty again were seen as playing a significant role as models for their students. Participants in the session on "Institutional Responsibility for Student Development" suggested that while many faculty are reluctant to acknowledge this role or to identify their own values, younger faculty seem to be more willing to recognize their potential influence, especially as advisers and mentors. Faculty panels or debates, in which respected faculty disagree on value questions, were suggested as a means for helping students recognize the importance of value commitments. Other suggestions for provoking discussion of value questions included plays and films, campus symposia, and visiting speakers.

On a broader level, it was pointed out that colleges themselves have a special responsibility to be principled, caring institutions. They should pay careful attention to the values they reflect and act upon as institutions. Governance, college support systems, and decisions about personnel, property, regulations, financial aid, tenure, and grading were all cited as value-laden and hence affecting value formation as they reflect institutional integrity.

## Science and Technology

Engineers, scientists, and humanists addressed the concerns and issues facing higher education as it prepares students for a world of increasing technological complexity in the three concurrent sessions on science and technology: "The Crisis for Education in Science and Technology," "Education in the Sciences and Technology for Non-Majors," and "Computers for Literacy in the Undergraduate Curriculum." The sessions addressed the state of science and technology education at the post-secondary level and offered some approaches to confronting these topics through the curriculum.

Asserting that C.P. Snow's "Two Cultures" are alive and well-divided, Rustum Roy, who chairs the Science, Technology, and Society Program at Pennsylvania State University, urged administrators to implement programs to interest students in today's issues shaped by technology. He and Samuel Goldberg, professor of applied mathematics at Oberlin College and visiting scholar at Harvard University's Center

for the Analysis of Health Practices, described how these interests can be stimulated in the session on "Education in the Sciences and Technology for Non-Majors," chaired by Paula Brownlee, president of Hollins College.

Roy stated that the multidisciplinary nature of world issues cannot be adequately addressed in regular disciplinary courses. "We must reconfigure our disciplines to fit the societal needs," he said. He also suggested that faculty members be grouped in interdisciplinary clusters which would examine specific problems. For instance, a physicist, biologist, psychologist, and sociologist might discuss environmental sciences; instructors in English, philosophy, physics, and engineering could explore communications issues. Roy viewed the articulation of material around human problems as the best method for covering a wide spectrum of topics--creating a distinctively contemporary general education, developing an interest in science, and preparing people for citizenship.

Goldberg agreed that the best way to interest non-science majors is to present current problems in a non-scientific context. Public policy issues, business procedures, and medical concerns are examples of this approach. Stressing the necessity for students to be sensitive to numbers if they want to be alert to what is going on in their environment, Goldberg presented the example of a pregnant middle-aged woman who is considering amniocentesis. With this problem, Goldberg demonstrated that even the audience of college administrators had difficulty manipulating probabilities to decide which of various alternatives whould present the least risk. Goldberg urged that instructors use word problems to force students to structure the problem, think about what they have to do, and realize the consequences of their actions. He cautioned that students must be made aware that the handling of uncertainty requires an understanding of probability and its interrelated values.

Elting E. Morison, James and Elizabeth Killiam Professor Emeritus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, continued this theme in "The Crisis for Education in Science and Technology" by urging administrators to expose undergraduates first hand to the development of technology and the excitement of expanding technological possibilities. Alberta Arthurs, president of Chatham College, emphasized the significant differences between current efforts to integrate scientific understanding into the curriculum and previous attempts to address this concern. She commented on the gravity and excitement of technology in our society and culture, the addition of technology to science, students' interests and preparation in these areas, the intellectual imperatives which touch all facets of human experience, and the materials generated by major institutions' programs on science, technology, and society.

Edward A. Friedman, who is dean of the college at Stevens Institute of Technology and who chairs the Council for Understanding Technology in Human Affairs, expressed concern for the drop in the number of engineering students going on to graduate school and the resulting shortage of engineering faculty. He further emphasized the seriousness of this problem if the United States is to continue as a vital, competitive nation. More generally, he stressed that all students must learn something about the world of technology to even understand the daily news or to participate as active citizens, coping with the technological advancements affecting everyone.

Barbara L. Carter, provost at Spelman College; Kent Curtis, head of the

Computer Science Section, Division of Mathematical and Computer Sciences at the National Science Foundation; and Richard R. Johnson, research director at the Exxon Education Foundation, discussed computers and the liberal arts student in "Computers for Literacy in Undergraduate Curriculum." Curtis began by presenting statistics on the labor market for computer professionals. Society, he said, is presently responding to the need for computer professionals by producing students who demand to be educated in computer fundamentals and professionals who can switch from their academic fields to computers because of their basic understanding of the systems. He urged colleges to train students to feel comfortable with computers as tools to be used throughout their professional lives. Such training should include programming and an understanding of data structures integrated into all disciplinary areas. To establish an effective computer literacy program, Curtis listed two essentials: appropriate equipment and concerned, capable staff members to implement the program.

Johnson agreed with Curtis' view that society will demand computer proficiency, saying the question is no longer "Will computers be used on campus?" but "How will they be used?" Johnson described several approaches to increasing computer literacy (for faculty as well as students): adding a course on computers, integrating material into disciplinary areas by discussing the impact of computers in a modern history course, for example, and employing the computer for writing instruction, testing purposes, and problem-solving. He called for AAC to begin to collect and disseminate information on how schools are using computers on their campuses.

In task force discussions on the rationale for science and technology in undergraduate education, essential content for the non-major, and institutional strategies for change, meeting participants offered some suggestions for what colleges and universities should be doing in these areas. Students, they noted, must participate in the decision-making process of the complex, contemporary society and must develop an awareness of the human dimensions of science and technology, as well as the achievements in those areas. Content discussions should center on scientific concepts, methodologies, and applications; computer and mathematical skills; the relationships between science and society; and interdisciplinary approaches. Other areas conference participants felt cannot be neglected are: curriculum, faculty development and faculty incentives, student academic backgrounds, and the political structure of each institution.

## Conclusion

AAC's quest for literacy in contemporary undergraduate education has not ended with a consideration of these three factors. In its 1983 Annual Meeting, to be held January 13-15 in Washington, D.C., it will confront the issue of "Liberal Education with a Civic Purpose: Public and Private Responsibility." The focus on these related issues in undergraduate education will culminate in 1985 with a report on AAC's three-year project to discover the meaning and purposes of baccalaureate degrees.

(Contributors: Susan Davis, John Hager, Peggy Brown)

SPECIAL ADDRESSES

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Directors - Samuel R. Spencer, Jr.

Nineteen eighty-one has been a year of both continued growth and refinement of the programs of the Association of American Colleges. As chairman of the Board of Directors, I am gratified by the Board's role in guiding the Association during this past year, and want to take a few moments to report to you on the work of the Board and the direction of policies and programs of the Association. I will not go into detail about accomplishments of the past year, which are impressive, since you each received a 1981 Annual Report of programs and activities in your registration folder.

Members of the Board have been outstanding in their devotion to this organization. They have been faithful in their attendance and serious about fulfilling their responsibility to maintain a viable and significant Association. Two matters have been of major concern to us during the year--sound fiscal management and the development of integrated, coherent programs that serve you as members and carry out the stated missions of the Association.

On the financial side, you will note in the Annual Report that the fiscal year ended on June 30 with a surplus of $61,000. This was made possible by careful use of funds, reduction in budgets where possible, and frugal management within the revised budget. The membership remained relatively stable throughout the calendar year and although we lost some members we attracted a number of new members to take their places. Our current fiscal year is well under way and the Association is financially stable and operating in the black. This is a favorable condition for any organization at this time and one to be proud of, particularly in light of the fact that AAC's dues are the lowest of any comparable national association.

Programs and activities of the Association have been continually refined in the past several years in a continuing effort to carry out the missions of the Association established by the decisions made in Philadelphia in 1976.

Beginning with the Annual Meeting last January, the staff and the Board have given a great deal of attention to coordinating activities around two major program areas. These two central themes were confirmed at the Annual Meeting last January when the Association adopted the resolution which read:

> That the Association of American Colleges in the immediate future direct the major part of its resources and efforts toward two purposes, namely,
>
> 1. one to improve the breadth, depth, quality and coherence of curricula leading to baccalaureate degrees, and
>
> 2. another to improve public understanding and support of liberal learning.

At the first full meeting of the Board last spring, which was the annual two-and-a-half day Board and staff retreat, we jointly reviewed this resolution and the

programs and activities that carry out this mandate from the Association. A great deal of the discussion focused on plans to establish a special project on the meaning and purpose of the baccalaureate degree and the steps that had been taken to implement those plans. Attention also centered on development of the program on public understanding of liberal learning which had already begun with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Through these extensive discussions with the staff, the Board approved proposed activities that would further implement these two directions for the Association. For example, the series of Wingspread Conferences, on Foreign Languages and International Studies, the Humanities, Women's Studies and a proposed one on Science and Technology, all further the concern for undergraduate education and provide an opportunity for leadership in setting directions for the ways in which these areas affect the undergraduate curriculum. In the second area of emphasis, the Board approved first, staff plans to work more closely with business and corporate leaders to develop greater understanding of the values of liberal education, and second, efforts to assist institutions in promoting public understanding and support for liberal learning in their local areas.

Another matter referred to the Board by the Association at last year's Annual Meeting in Denver was the responsibility for reviewing the recommendations made in task force discussions on five topic areas. You will recall that those topics were: the meaning of the undergraduate degree, accreditation and accountability, lifelong liberal learning, connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and the role of athletics in liberal education.

After careful analysis of all of the recommendations and proposals for action made by the task force discussions, the Board reached several conclusions affecting the development and direction of the program. These conclusions were guided foremost by our concern for maintaining the focus on missions and goals of the Association. For obvious reasons the Board asked the staff to put its major priorities on recommendations regarding the undergraduate curriculum and to incorporate, insofar as possible, specific concerns expressed by the members into plans for the project on the meaning and purpose of the baccalaureate degree. Although the second area of greatest concern was that of connections with secondary education, the Board felt that considerable preliminary work should be done before the staff attempted to launch specific activities in this area. Following our direction to maintain contact with others who are concerned with this area, the staff has established liaison with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in its efforts to study secondary education, and with the College Entrance Examination Board's Project Equality, which is focusing on appropriate achievements of students who wish to enter college. Further, AAC sponsored a panel presentation regarding standards for admission to college for the annual meeting of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors in October, at their request. The staff has also developed a proposal seeking funds to establish a QUILL-type small grants program for institutions willing to develop partnerships between liberal arts faculty and their counterparts in the local secondary schools.

Accreditation, a third area of discussion in the task forces at Denver, is a matter about which the Association has always been concerned. The interests of those members who participated in the discussions in Denver are being carried out, we believe, by AAC's constant efforts to maintain regular involvement with appropriate accrediting bodies. For example, we have an appointed representative to the board of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). In addition, during the past year,

the staff has developed liaison with three of the regional associations and has plans to make contact with the others. Last spring, Mark Curtis addressed a major session of the North Central Association and was the featured luncheon speaker for the Middle States' College Commission at its recent meeting in Philadelphia. At the Southern Association meeting last month we held our own breakfast meeting for members of AAC and a number of invited presidents where we discussed current programs and AAC activities. Since it is clear that all of the accrediting associations are working on the issue of quality in undergraduate education and the development of new standards for program evaluation, it is imperative that we maintain our interest in the accrediting process and work closely with these groups in order to relate our actions and concerns to their activities.

In its review of recommendations of the task forces, the Board felt that lifelong liberal learning and athletics had to be given lower priority than the others, not because these matters are unimportant, but simply because of the limitations of a small staff on a lean budget. It is also obvious that other groups are carrying out a number of activities in both areas. We urged the staff to maintain liaison with those groups in order to remain informed and to be able to move if necessary into specific proposals for our own activities. During the course of the year, for example, the staff has been consulted about the work of the new ACE Commission on the Adult Learner and was represented at the first meeting of that Commission. There has also been regular staff contact with the President's Commission on Collegiate Athletics at ACE and we have been kept fully informed of their work.

The future of AAC will depend on the vitality of its programs and their relevance to the needs of your institutions. The Annual Report you received in your registration folders illustrates for all of us AAC's progress in developing a comprehensive and coherent set of programs which carry out the mission of the Association as revised in Philadelphia five years ago. Through the project on the undergraduate degree, as well as through the emphases of this Annual Conference, AAC is helping member institutions deal with such future-oriented elements of undergraduate education as global perspectives and the use of technology in almost all of the disciplines. Through the project on public understanding, it is providing an essential service both to institutions and to the cause of liberal learning. Substantial grants from national foundations, obtained through the good work of Mark Curtis and the staff, represent a strong vote of confidence in the importance of AAC's mission and program. All of this offers evidence of a viable association with a significant task to perform, one that is worthy of our full participation and strong support.

Working with you and with members of the Board and staff has been a pleasure for me, and I thank you for the privilege of serving as your chairman.

Address of the President - Mark H. Curtis

For organizations like the Association of American Colleges, as well as for individual colleges and universities, it is good to pause occasionally in order to take stock of what they are doing and how they got involved in their present activities. So long as introspection does not become a constant preoccupation, bordering on institutional hypochondria, it can be a tonic for a healthy organization as well as for a healthy campus.

Six years ago, at the Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, our association came to a divide in the road. It had the choice of taking a direction that would lead it to the goal of being the national voice for independent higher education and of restricitng its membership to private, independent colleges and universities, or it could follow another path which would lead it to its being the national voice for liberal learning and an agency for promoting and enhancing liberal education on all kinds of campuses, both independent and public. As all know, it was decided that the Association should take the second fork in the road. It divested itself of most responsibilities for federal relations and assisted in establishing the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to be the representative and advocate for independent higher education in Washington. AAC then assumed the fundamental mission of actively promoting "concern for and discussion of basic educational policy issues, with special emphasis on arts and sciences and on the functions and problems that are intrinsic to the educational process and its environment." This purpose was understood to include public understanding of educational issues in general and the liberal arts in particular.

Many of you will remember, as I keenly do, and some of you participated in, as I did, the spirited debate which led to this decision. It turned on the key issue of whether there would be a viable role for AAC to play in the future. As I remember the debate, no voice questioned the importance of fostering concern for basic educational issues and promoting liberal education. All agreed with Edgar Carlson and his colleagues, who had prepared the report and recommendations for the Annual Meeting, "that it would be a gross disservice to the higher education community of this and succeeding generations, as well as to the general public, if that role were to be vacated." The crux of the matter was whether such a role could be the foundation of a self-sustaining, viable national association. Honest, thoughtful persons had serious differences of opinion on that issue. Some saw the risks involved as portents of ultimate failure. Others, and they proved to be the majority, recognized them as hazards but not dire threats.

It was predictable, and predicted at that meeting, that a number of independent institutions would find it impossibly expensive to belong to both AAC and NAICU and would regretfully elect to be members only of NAICU. Experience fulfilled such prophesy. At the time of the 1976 Annual Meeting, 602 independent colleges and universities were members of AAC. By the Annual Meeting in 1981 that number had fallen to 456.

On the other hand, a hope expressed in the Carlson report, but heavily discounted by pessimists, had proven to be substantial. Whereas in 1976 only 90 public colleges and universities were members of AAC, the roster at the time of the last Annual Meeting showed a rise in that number of 54 for a total 144. In other words, strong interest in liberal education in public institutions has attracted more than half again as many members from that sector of higher education as belonged to the Association in 1976.

Sustaining a dues-paying membership of a respectable size is only the roughest measure of viability. Much more important is what the Association could do, did, and is now doing not only to justify the confidence of old members or to appeal to new members but to serve the essential interests of higher education and the need of society for an educated citizenry. Fred Ness, then president of the Association, addressed the Philadelphia Annual Meeting and showed decisively that he and the

Board had the courage and vision to proceed vigorously with the task despite the doubts of many. He stated firmly:

> We believe that liberal arts education is essential to the advancement of our nation and that it is currently in the doldrums. We believe that only by a concerted effort...can this trend be reversed. We believe that the programmatic elements for a new approach to liberal learning are ascertainable....We believe that a new configuration uniting the interests and resources of a wide range of individuals, institutions, agencies, and foundations is feasible....We believe that the leadership required... can be...recruited. We believe that the time for such an enterprise... is now.

In his speech he identified prophetically three of the key building stones that have become the foundation of a viable organization devoted to the advancement of liberal and humane learning.

> First, the Association must combine a continuing concern for liberal arts colleges with a deepening interest in the liberal arts divisions of large public institutions and foster a "community of interest" between them.
>
> Second, efforts must be made to deal forthrightly with the "alleged dichotomy" between the liberal and the practical arts.
>
> Third, the Association must reawaken and nurture an understanding that liberal education is a continuum through all levels of education from the lowest to the highest and therefore the Association must give attention to the state of liberal education in secondary schools and graduate/professional training as well as in undergraduate programs of study.

Immediately following the Philadelphia meeting, the President and Board, guided by special advisory bodies, began to set new objectives that focused the work and resources of the Association on the advancement of liberal education in all its various forms and wherever it is or should be pursued on the campuses of the nation. That effort culminated this last year in a review and evaluation of the experiments and developments of the past five years. What has emerged is a lively sense that a renewed AAC has translated the ideals of its mission into substantive projects, activities, and services that provide signigicant benefits first to its members and then to the whole community of higher education.

I must pause here to acknowledge with deep appreciation the indispensable assistance that the Association has received throughout this transition from certain foundations. Each of our Annual Reports has recorded our gratitude to all the contributors to our efforts in any particular year. At this moment, however, I want to pay particular tribute to the Ford Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Exxon Education Foundation, The Sears Roebuck Foundation, and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, whose vision and special grants have made it possible for the Association to weather a time of risk and uncertainty and to demonstrate once again the value of uniting idealism and practicality.

Perhaps the best measure of AAC's vitality and viability at this point in its history is its readiness to undertake a far-reaching project with momentous possibilities. It's a project that knits together most of AAC's other activities and that holds promise of widespread benefits to higher education. Its goal is to improve the quality and coherence of undergraduate education and to revive, if possible, consensus about the meaning and purpose of baccalaureate degrees.

A year ago, in addressing members at the Annual Meeting in Denver, I shared my concern about the deteriorating quality of undergraduate education in these words:

> Granted that attention to the financial bottom line is essential to assure that institutions of higher education survive the 1980s, still the final accounting for colleges and universities is not whether they have a surplus or break even financially, but whether they have used the funds and property entrusted to them to achieve the ends for which they were established and dedicated. I recognize that the purposes they serve are multiple: they offer advanced studies, pursue research, promote scholarship, perform public and social services. Yet at the heart of colleges and universities lies one fundamental purpose on which all of these others are grounded. It is the mission and high calling of offering a sound, well-balanced undergraduate education. If colleges and universities fail in that fundamental trust, they will be unfaithful stewards and will deserve to be called severely to account.

I continued by discussing weaknesses in current undergraduate programs which, if they persist, will undermine public confidence in colleges and universities and force a serious accounting upon them by the end of the 1980s. In particular, I commented on fragmentation and lack of coherence in undergraduate education, overspecialization and premature professionalism, which is not confined only to technical and professional courses but is also characteristic of programs in traditional fields of the liberal arts, and the loss of a sense of civic purpose, grounded on an understanding of ethics and values as they affect the quality of life for both individuals and society. These weaknesses in sum are symptoms of a debilitating condition. We have lost our hold on a fundamental purpose of education. We can define rather precisely what it means to be a specialist such as an historian, psychologist, physicist, engineer, physician, or expert in business administration, but we no longer seem able to agree on what comprises a complete and generous education that would give specialists the capacities and understanding to be responsible human beings. I repeat, we today find it next to impossible to define a literate, educated person and to keep our other educational programs oriented by that lodestar.

A sign of widespread uneasiness about this lack of purpose is, I suggest, the rising interest in general education, or what Ernest Boyer and Arthur Levine of the Carnegie Foundation have called "common learning." One of the first undertakings of our recently established Center for General Education was a survey to determine the degree and nature of this interest. The results are enlightening. More than 88 percent of the institutions responding reported that either they have recently revised such programs or they currently have them under review and revision. Just as revealing were the attitudes towards general education within these institutions. More than 70 percent of the faculty and 78 percent of the administrations on these campuses now have a more favorable attitude toward general education than heretofore.

Within the scope of general education, certain deficiencies in undergraduate programs are now getting special attention. In the last fifteen months, the Association has sponsored, with the help of the Johnson Foundation and others, three conferences at Wingspread in Racine, Wisconsin, on foreign languages and international studies, humanities, and the implications of scholarship on women for liberal eduation. Early in the summer a fourth conference on literacy in science and technology will take place. Participants in these conferences, drawn from a wide variety of colleges and universities across the country, have acknowledged that deficiencies in undergraduate education, pointed up by national reports such as those of the Perkins Commission and the Rockefeller Commission, are real. They declared them to be serious problems for colleges and universities and proposed to their colleagues in all institutions a few fundamental recommendations on how they may best be met.

Yet the root of all these problems is a matter that calls for comprehensive, not piecemeal, treatment. As I have suggested earlier, it lies not with a deficiency here or an inadequacy there, but with the design and sense of purpose for the whole. As this point came to be appreciated, the Association, guided by the Commission on Curriculum Development and the Board of Directors, developed a plan to undertake a nationwide project aimed at addressing all the issues involved in improving coherence and quality of undergraduate education. In the course of these deliberations, it was perceived that the most promising point of attack would be our confusion about the meaning and purpose of baccalaureate degrees. Hence, the project aims at these specific goals:

1. To revive a consensus among faculty, deans, presidents, and trustees on the meaning and purpose of baccalaureate degrees and on the principles for organizing and structuring academic programs leading to such degrees;

2. To identify and define, as a result of such discussion, appropriate levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which should result from undergraduate programs of study;

3. To develop and publish criteria and guidelines for assessing quality in undergraduate education that can be used a) by colleges and universities in judging and improving their various programs, b) by the public in becoming informed on what should normally be expected of a college education, and c) by accrediting associations and agencies as guides for fulfilling their responsibilities.

In undertaking this project, we recognize that American higher education is conducted in more than 3,000 accredited institutions which enjoy a high degree of autonomy in determining their academic policies and programs. These institutions differ in their missions according to the interests and needs of the students they serve. Therefore, this project will provide recommendations and program examples which will serve as reasonable, feasible guides to a wide variety of institutional types.

At the same time, the Association appreciates that the historical process which has brought us both our present plight and our present opportunity is irreversible. Reform cannot come from restoration. We must come to terms with the achievements

as well as the problems bequeathed to us by the last hundred years of academic change. What we need, therefore, is the imagination, courage and persistence to ask critical, probing questions about what it means to be literate in our day, to develop new conceptual principles for creating a modern curriculum in liberal education, to define structures that will integrate liberal learning and technical and professional programs, even at the baccalaureate level, and thus to assure that all higher education will be undergirded with basic programs of coherence and quality.

In announcing this program today, I am deeply pleased and gratified to report that the Pew Memorial Trust of Philadelphia has provided both the initial funding to get it started and a continuing grant to cover nearly half of its ongoing costs. It is a project which will extend over a period of three years. Our deliberations here at this Annual Meeting in Boston, focusing on the theme "Literacy in the Contemporary World, marks its beginning. This meeting opens an extended dialogue which will engage the efforts of academic leaders throughout the nation. From time to time the project will issue interim reports and publications which should be useful to member institutions, but its final report and recommendations will be rendered at the Annual Meeting of the Association in 1985.

Although colleges and universities are facing uncertain years because of demographic changes, corrosive influences of inflation, and the withdrawal of the federal government from long-standing commitments to the promotion of educational opportunities for all citizens, the time is ripe for such an effort. A sense of urgency about the quality of undergraduate education exists both on campuses of the nation and in the mind of the public. Without being a Pollyanna, I am convinced that, despite threats to the academic economy, adversity handled with imagination has uses at this juncture which, if not sweet, will be beneficial.

Another promising sign is that distinguished men and women have joined us to lead the project as members of the Oversight Committee. Because they are so important to the success of the project, I ask your indulgence while I cite their names for you.

Dr. Benjamin Alexander, President of Chigaco State University
Dr. Arnold Arons, Professor of Physics, University of Washington
Dr. Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Dr. David Breneman, Senior Fellow of the Brookings Institution
Dr. Carleton Chapman, Chairman of the department of the History of Medicine, Albert Einstein School of Medicine, and formerly President of the Commonwealth Fund
Dr. Martha Church, President of Hood College
Dr. Elizabeth Coleman, Dean of the New School for Social Research
Dr. Harold Enarson, President Emeritus of Ohio State University and now Senior Adviser to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Dr. Paul Gross, Director of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts
Dr. Richard Kuhns, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University
Dr. Theodore Lockwood, who has just stepped down from the presidency of Trinity College, Connecticut, and is now director of the United World College of the American West, and who is senior consultant to the project

Dr. Robert McCabe, President of Miami-Dade Community College
Dr. Charles Muscatine, Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley
Dr. Leonard Reiser, Provost of Dartmouth College
Dr. Gresham Riley, President of Colorado College
Dr. Frederick Rudolph, Professor of History at Williams College
Dr. Jonathan Smith, Dean at the University of Chicago

By far and away, the most striking evidence that this project is timely is the conjunction of other projects, undertaken by concerned groups in the country, to address similar needs in American education. To name only the most well known: The College Board has already undertaken an important parallel effort to define the basic academic competencies and the basic academic curriculum to prepare students for college in the 1980s; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, under the direction of its president, Ernest Boyer, has stimulated concern for "common learning," has had a conference on the articulation of programs between school and college, and is at work on studies of the major; the American Association of Medical Colleges has established a commission chaired by President Steven Muller of Johns Hopkins to recommend improvements in medical education; the National Commission on Higher Education Issues, sponsored by the American Council on Education, has identified quality in higher education as a critical problem requiring immediate attention; and the President of the United States has set up a Presidential Commission on quality in American education at all levels, chaired by President David P. Gardner of the University of Utah. We are in close touch with all these groups.

Furthermore, as we have been developing the plan for our project, I have shared our thinking with the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the National Academy of Sciences, and I have received not only enthusiastic encouragement from them but promises that they are prepared to assist us in carrying on the nationwide dialogue and in striving to attain fruitful results from it. The heads of these three influential organizations all agree that the state of undergraduate education is a national problem requiring a full-scale attack upon it.

As we have conceived and planned this project, we have kept one question constantly before us: what is it proper for a national association, without any direct responsibilities for conducting an educational program, to do in dealing with the problems of quality and coherence in undergraduate education? We recognize the autonomy of each college and university. We are proud and jealous of the fact that the American system has no ministry of education authorized to prescribe an authoritative curriculum for all colleges and universities, and we do not intend to act as such an agency. We do, however, think and believe that the Association of American Colleges can and should exercise a role of leadership and coordination at this critical moment in the history of higher education. In face of widespread general concern, indeed of almost free-floating anxiety about this issue, initiative by an association, composed of colleges and universities from all sectors of American higher education and sensitive to all the interests involved, may properly assist disparate, well-intentioned but floundering efforts. It can be the means to avoid frustration and to achieve a goal within sight.

To carry out our undertaking appropriately and effectively, and to reach a substantial measure of its promise, we shall need to work together under the auspices

of our Association with good will and confidence in one another. I have faith in the possibility of our doing so. We shall also need to bear constantly in mind that it is not the beginning of the race but the pressing on to the mark that deserves commendation. Speaking for the Board and staff of the Association, I pledge that we will stick the course.

Thank you.

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